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UNCLAS GUATEMALA 001853

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [GT](#)

SUBJECT: AIDS Worker Escapes Kidnapping

1. (U) Summary: Violence against human rights workers has escalated in recent months and a group working to educate street workers on the prevention and danger of HIV/AIDS has been the most recent victim of such assaults. There have been several threats and acts of intimidation against workers of the Organization to Support Integrated Sexuality Against AIDS (OASIS) as a result of stigmatization and discrimination against those of diverse sexual orientation. End Summary.

Background

2. (U) An estimated 67,000 people (out of a population of 12 million) in Guatemala are HIV positive, and approximately 5,619 people have AIDS. Seventy-three percent of these are male. The communities most at risk are homosexual males (11.5 percent), followed by prostitutes (4.7 percent).

3. (U) OASIS is one of the only human rights groups in Guatemala working with homosexual men and prostitutes in order to curb HIV/AIDS infection rates among these high-risk communities. The organization originated ten years ago as part of the Association for Integrated Health, and educates homosexual men on prevention issues associated with the HIV virus. Approximately 100 people attend weekly meetings concerning HIV prevention, mental health, self-esteem and other health related topics. Moreover, OASIS works with about 1,000 prostitutes every month to prevent contraction of HIV and sells condoms to them for a price of ten cents, about half the street value of a condom.

OASIS Director Receives Threats

4. (U) On July 10, POL Intern and ECON Intern met with Jorge Lopez Sologaitoa, Executive Director of OASIS, who has become another victim of the recent wave of human rights abuses afflicting Guatemala. He recounted that on the morning of May 13, 2003, two unarmed men kidnapped Lopez while he was walking to his car. One of the assailants forced him into the back of the car, blindfolded him and restrained his head to constrict his sight while the other man drove away from the scene. Lopez escaped during momentary confusion when his kidnappers nearly collided with another car. They did not pursue him on foot. Lopez has also received repeated threats over the telephone.

5. (U) Lopez wrote a full page complaint of the incident which appeared in el Periodico on June 7. The complaint advocated human rights for all people regardless of economic condition, gender, or sexual orientation. Seventy-five other organizations from seventeen countries signed onto the complaint expressing their solidarity with OASIS's cause.

6. (U) Lopez noted that acts of intimidation and other human rights violations are frequent in his line of work. He contends that low ranking police officers are believed to be involved in committing these acts. He also believes that further acts of aggression will occur, but that he will continue his work and will not allow these actions to stop him from achieving the goals and objectives of his organization.

Comment

7. (U) The kidnapping attempt against Lopez, and the frequent attacks against homosexuals, occur in a context of growing violent crime affecting all Guatemalans, and an increase in threats against human rights workers specifically. Homosexuals and those with AIDS are targets of violent discrimination due to lack of education and awareness in some sectors of society. We will continue to monitor and report on this situation.